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Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 05813 010039Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8617
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PN, ACON, IWY, MX
SUBJECT: REACTION TO US CONGRESSIONAL POSITION ON PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A. MEXICO 5720; B. MEXICO 5765

1. PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS ATTENDING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE MADE USE OF THIS GENERALLY SYMPATHETIC FORUM TO REACT STRONGLY AGAINST CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON NEGOTIATIONS. BERTA TORRIJOS DE AROSEMENA, SISTER OF PANAMANIAN GENERAL TORRIJOS AND DELEGATE TO THE CONFERENCE, IN A SPEECH ON JUNE 29, SAID THAT PANAMA "DOES NOT SEEK WAR NOR VIOLENT SITUATIONS, BUT NEITHER DO WE FEAR THEM." SHE DISCUSSED U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL ASSERTING THAT, "SINCE THE NINETEENTH CENTURY THE PANAMANIANS HAVE SUFFERED AGGRESSION, INTERVENTION, OFFENSES AND HUMILIATION BY THE UNITED STATES." U.S. TROOPS, SHE SAID, WERE REQUIRED IN 1965 TO CONTAIN THE IRRESISTIBLE CURRENT OF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE. "THE SO-CALLED CALAN ZONE", SHE SAID, IS AN ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND MILITARY ENTERPRISE OF THE UNITED STATES WHICH EXPLOITS "PANAMA'S PRINCIPAL NATURAL RESOURCE IN (THE UNITED STATES') EXCLUSIVE BENEFIT, PRACTISING THE POLICY OF DISCRIMINATION WITH RESPECT TO LABOR, WAGES, RACE, HOUSING,
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PAGE 02 MEXICO 05813 010039Z

AND EDUCATION." SHE CONCLUDED, "WE PANAMANIANS ARE NOT

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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006

DISPOSED TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATING IN PERPETUITY WITH THE
UNITED STATES, NOR TO CONTINUE BEING DECEIVED WITH
AMBIGUOUS WORDS."

2. A FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR WITH THE PANAMANIAN DELEGATION
TO THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, JULIO YAU, REACTED EVEN MORE
AGGREEISVELY IN COMMENTS TO JOURNALISTS: "IF PANAMA DOES
NOT RECOVER THE CANAL ZONE, NO ONE CAN KEEP THE PANAMANIANS
FROM DESTROYING, INCAPACITATING OR PARALYZING THE CANAL;
WE DON'T HAVE TO HAVE A GREAT MILITARY FORCE TO DO THIS.
IF PANAMA CANNOT DEFEND THE CANAL AGAINST A FOREIGN POWER,
NEITHER CAN THE UNITED STATES DEFEND IT AGAINST THE
PANAMANIANS."

4. FOLLOWING MRS. AROSEMENA'S SPEECH, YAU APPROACHED
AMBASSADOR JOVA TO SAY THAT PANAMANIANS MUST RESPOND TO
NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL
AUDIENCE, I.E. MUST MAKE STATEMENTS SUCH AS THOSE CITED
ABOVE. HE SAID THAT THIS DOES NOT, REPEAT NOT, CHANGE
PANAMA'S INTENTION TO KEEP NEGOTIATING. HE NOTED THAT BOTH
SIDES HAVE TROUBLESOME DOMESTIC GROUPS WHOSE VIEWS MUST BE
TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, AND HE INDICATED THAT GOP UNDERSTANDS
USG PROBLEMS IN THIS RESPECT. HE COMMENTED THAT THEY
HAD PREPARED A HARD SPEECH BUT HAD TO MAKE IT HARDER
BECAUSE OF U.S. CONGRESSIONAL ACTION, I.E. THE SNYDER AMENDMENT.
AMBASSADOR INFORMED YAU THAT USDEL WOULD EXERCISE RIGHT OF
REPLY BUT IN ELEVATED LANGUAGE. FOLLOWING STATEMENT BY
USDEL HUTAR, REPORTED REFTEL B, YAU EXPRESSED GRATIFICATION
AT TONE AND CONTENT OF HER RESPONSE.

4. INDEPENDENT, INFLUENTIAL EXCELSIOR EDITORIALIZED ON
JUNE 30 THAT THE CANAL QUESTION CANNOT BE LIMITED TO THE
DIRECTLY-INTERESTED PARTIES BUT IS IMPORTANT TO THE WHOLE
HEMISPHERE. NO LATIN AMERICAN CAN REMAIN INDIFFERENT ON
THIS QUESTION. IF THE U.S. HAS SOME BUSINESS IN PANAMA,
THE EDITORIAL ARGUED, ON THE BASIS OF THE "IMPOSED" TREATY
OF 1903, IT CAN ONLY BE ON THE BASIS OF A CONCESSION SUBJECT
TO NORMS WHICH CAN NEVER OVERRIDE PANAMA'S RIGHT OF EMINENT
DOMAIN.

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5. THERE HAS BEEN THUS FAR NO OFFICIAL COMMENT BY MEXICAN
OFFICIALS ON THE RECENT CONGRESSIONAL ACTION. JOVA

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